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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 701st MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 23 May 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Initial report of Turkey (CRC/C/51/Add.4; written replies of the Government of Turkey to the questions in the list of issues (document without a symbol distributed in the meeting room in English only))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Turkey took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. SUNGAR (Turkey), introducing the initial report of Turkey (CRC/C/51/Add.4), said that it had been prepared by ad hoc committees comprising representatives of public agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities and international organizations.

3. According to the 2000 census, 38.4 per cent of the Turkish population were aged 18 or less. Children's Day, which had been celebrated on 23 April each year for almost eight decades, had become an international event since 1979, with the participation of children from all over the world.

4. When ratifying the Convention in 1994, Turkey had reserved the right to interpret the provisions of articles 17, 29 and 30 in accordance with the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and the Turkish Constitution. The rights of Turkish nationals belonging to the Greek, Armenian and Jewish minorities were laid down in articles 38 to 44 of the Treaty of Lausanne and were basically no different from those enjoyed by other Turkish nationals. In particular, minorities were entitled to establish, manage and control charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational establishments at their own expense and to practise their religion freely. Education in the 44 Armenian, 29 Greek and 4 Jewish private schools was imparted in the minorities' own language.

5. Turkey had signed the Optional Protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict in September 2000. It had ratified the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights in January 2001 and six International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions directly related to children, including the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

6. Turkey's Social Services and Child Protection Agency, the coordinating agency for implementation of the Convention, had launched a Child Rights Campaign in 2000 to mark the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministries of the Interior, National Education, Health, Justice, Labour and Social Security. One of the events in the campaign had been the First National Congress of Children, attended by children from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds, including children with disabilities, children working as apprentices and children living or working in the street. Adult delegates from public institutions and NGOs had also taken part. Problems related to the implementation of the Convention had been discussed and the children had produced a declaration containing recommendations for

submission to the President of the Republic. A Council for the Rights of the Child had been convened in May 2000, the First Istanbul Child Assembly in June 2000 and a Children's Forum in November 2000.

7. A study of legislation had been carried out to assess its conformity with the Convention and a checklist on implementation of the Convention had been compiled. Both documents would be updated regularly. A Higher Council and a Subcommittee for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Rights of the Child, comprising representatives of State bodies, had been established to enhance the effectiveness of the Social Services and Child Protection Agency. Representatives of NGOs and academics were invited to attend their proceedings.

8. The General Directorate of the Social Services and Child Protection Agency attended to the needs of children entrusted to the care of the State by court order. Services were provided for some 17,000 children in 81 children's homes and 98 training establishments for older children. The institutions were currently being reorganized into family units consisting of small groups of children. Foster care placements were also encouraged. The Agency also ran crèches and day-care centres, particularly for the children of working mothers. Care and rehabilitation services for disabled children were provided in residential and day-care institutions, community recreation centres and family consultation centres. There were quotas in the public agencies and institutions for the employment of children needing special care. Some 17,000 children had benefited from the scheme since 1989. The number of community centres run by the Social Services and Child Protection Agency had risen to 39 in the past two years. The involvement of NGOs and the local population in the centres was encouraged. Branches of the Agency at the provincial and sub-district level ensured that its services were available on a decentralized basis.

9. The infant, child and maternal mortality rates were decreasing and new programmes to improve child and maternal health and reduce morbidity, such as adolescent health and nutritional programmes, had been launched. An administrative body had been established to coordinate the efforts of the Ministries of Education, Health, Labour and Social Security and other agencies on behalf of disabled children. Structural obstacles to their education, employment and rehabilitation had been removed and relevant legislation amended.

10. The State Institute of Statistics served as coordinator for efforts to improve data concerning children, including indicators of compliance with the Convention. The Turkish Government and UNICEF would cooperate to that end under the Child and Woman Information Network Project covering the period from 2001 to 2005.

11. Twenty-two new centres for children living and working in the street had recently been opened with the cooperation of NGOs. Counselling, training and rehabilitation services were provided to the children and their families. The children were enrolled in schools and vocational programmes and their nutritional and health problems were addressed. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security was coordinating a project in Izmir to train some 1,500 children under 15 years of age in trades such as shoemaking, car maintenance and cloth manufacturing under the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. The Ministry of Education had signed a Protocol with ILO in July 2000 for a project to promote the education of working children.

12. The Social Services and Child Protection Agency had begun to implement an early childhood development project to prepare children in disadvantaged areas for school, to provide them with health and nutritional care and to contribute to their social development. The Agency and the Ministry of Justice had signed a protocol on a project for the children of arrested or convicted women prisoners. A "Love Chain Project" had been launched to provide children under six living in children's homes with assistance in their physical, mental and social development. Under a regulation issued in April 2001, child protection units had been established in the Security Directorates in every province and sub-district.

13. Two severe earthquakes had struck Turkey in 1999, causing heavy loss of life and damage to property. Social service units, including crèches, psycho-social information centres and youth centres, had been established in the temporary residential units set up for displaced persons. Some 2,500 children and teenagers had benefited from their services. The children had published a regular newspaper and theatre groups had been set up with NGO assistance.

14. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said she was pleased to note that the initial report had been prepared in conformity with the Committee's reporting guidelines and that civil society had participated in the process. The written replies were comprehensive and included the requested statistical data. She had also read the Turkish Government's national monitoring report for the United Nations General Assembly special session on children, which was a forward-looking document that was highly critical of the current situation.

15. She was pleased to note that the Turkish Government had signed the Optional Protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as well as the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights and other major human rights instruments. Was the ratification of those instruments expected in the near future? The Government's refusal to review Turkey's reservations to articles 17, 29 and 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was regrettable, especially as those articles included the aims of education, which had recently been the subject of a general comment issued by the Committee, and the role of the mass media. She hoped the Government would consider reviewing those reservations.

16. The education budget had grown significantly since the mid-1990s, partly because compulsory education had been extended to age 14. Allocations for health care had also increased, albeit much less quickly. The Eighth Five-Year Development Plan should include increased allocations for health, especially mother and child care, in order to improve the quality of life. Various social security schemes reportedly provided additional resources for health care; she would appreciate a description of the funding mechanisms involved. Was funding available from the private sector for health, education and economic, social and cultural rights? As most family problems were of a socio-economic nature, it was of interest to the Committee to know whether the current tax reform was aimed at poverty alleviation. What priorities were chosen in allocating State budget resources to support economic, social and cultural rights? The Committee would also like to know how the Government planned to delegate more power to the local authorities and municipalities, especially in respect of the Convention's implementation.

17. Mr. AL-SHEDDI welcomed the information provided by the State party on the numerous studies, workshops and conferences that had been held in Turkey on children's rights and related

issues, but felt it was regrettable that the report said nothing about their results. There was evidently a need to improve the situation of disabled children, and infrastructure, in particular for health care, was lacking. The participation of civil society should be encouraged, as children's issues were everyone's concern, but it should not be limited to the drafting of the State party's report.

18. Ms. CHUTIKUL called on the Turkish Government to reconsider its reservation to the Convention. The laudable efforts made on behalf of minority groups demonstrated the Government's concern for their welfare, hence the reservation was no longer needed.

19. According to the report education was compulsory through age 14, and the labour legislation generally prohibited the employment of children under 15. Yet the introductory statement had mentioned a project implemented with the help of the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), which was training as many as 1,500 children under 15 years of age in Izmir in car maintenance, shoemaking and cloth manufacturing. She would appreciate an explanation of that apparent contradiction.

20. Ms. SARDENBERG asked in what ways universities had taken part in the drafting of the report, and how they assisted the Government in the implementation of the Convention. While the incorporation of the Convention into domestic law was a positive step, it was regrettable that Turkey maintained its reservation. Noting that the Government might have the opportunity to reconsider it as part of the process of accession to the European Union, she asked what problems were foreseen if the reservation was withdrawn. While the State party had signed all six major human rights conventions, it had not ratified the two Covenants and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Did it plan to do so in the near future?

21. The Committee would appreciate information about any research conducted into the effects of the International Monetary Fund stabilization programme, especially its possible impact on children. There was currently no national human rights institution in Turkey, but a draft law had reportedly been introduced in Parliament in October 2000 with the aim of establishing an Ombudsman's office. What was the status of that legislation? Would the rights of the child be within the purview of such an office, and if not, were there any plans to set up a separate Ombudsman's office for children?

22. Ms. OUEDRAOGO welcomed the incorporation of the Convention into domestic law, and asked whether it had ever been invoked in court. Given the large number of Turkish citizens working in other countries, was the Government considering ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families? She asked how the Social Services and Child Protection Agency worked with the other coordinating bodies, such as the Council for Children's Rights, the Advisory Councils and the Human Rights Coordinating High Committee. It would also be interesting to learn whether the Department for Protection and Monitoring of Children's Rights could receive complaints lodged directly by children.

23. The Committee welcomed the efforts made to make the Convention known throughout Turkish society. Nonetheless, there was a lack of information on the training offered to professionals such as teachers and policemen, and the report did not mention whether children's

rights were taught in educational institutions. Did the delegation consider that youths, including those who did not attend school, were aware of children's rights? Had the report been published, and if so, had the public, including children, been given the opportunity to make comments on it? The Government should consider changing the age limit for marriage, which was excessively low. It would be interesting to learn whether workers under the age of 18 were informed of their rights both as children and as workers.

24. Mr. CITARELLA, noting that the Convention had become part of domestic law, asked whether the Government was aware of any legislative measures that were in contradiction with its provisions, and if so how it dealt with them. According to a report carried out under the auspices of UNICEF, in defining the child Turkish legislation referred to various ages, some of which were apparently at variance with the Convention. For example, under the current law, a 14-year-old girl could marry and conclude legally-binding contracts, but she could not take part in elections, acquire a passport or seek employment despite the fact that the courts would recognize her as having reached the age of majority. As part of its application for accession to the European Union, Turkey had undertaken a commitment, albeit an informal one, to reconsider questions such as the withdrawal of its reservation to the Convention.

25. Ms. KARP noted the need for far-reaching reforms in order to ensure implementation of the rights of the child, not only in institutions but also in the public's way of thinking. According to the information received by the Committee, parental authority was still very strong in Turkish society. To what extent were children regarded as autonomous individuals fully entitled to enjoy their rights? The Committee would welcome information on the practical situation of children and their right to participate in decisions taken at school and at home. Had any steps been taken to encourage interaction and dialogue?

26. According to the written replies to the list of issues, a book had recently been published on the conformity of domestic law with the Convention. Was that work intended to serve as a starting point for the revision of legislation? The Ministry of Justice had established the Turkish Civil Code Commission to ensure conformity with the Convention of laws relating to the rights of the child. While review of legislation was commendable, it was unclear to what extent the Commission's mandate focused on children's rights.

27. What was the practical relationship between the central authorities and the provinces, especially with regard to social services, which were generally provided by the latter? Did the Government reallocate funds to ensure that the amount of resources for such services was sufficient throughout the country, including in the poorer regions? According to the written replies, the Higher Council for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Rights of the Child had both coordinating and monitoring functions. The composition of that body, which included representatives of many Government ministries and services, appeared to be particularly well-suited for coordination tasks. However, it was questionable whether it could be effective in monitoring implementation of the Convention, as it might lack independence. Did child-friendly mechanisms exist for lodging complaints of child abuse in institutions, homes and schools? Lastly, what were the specific reasons for the need to maintain the State party's reservation to the Convention?

28. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ asked how the provision of the Civil Code denying to persons of unsound mind the right to exercise civil and political rights affected the rights of children under the Convention.

29. The CHAIRPERSON noted that the World Children's Summit National Monitoring Report of the Turkish Government listed lessons learned in the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Children, but did not include those lessons in the section on future actions. In that regard, he would like to know how the goals of the National Plan of Action were coordinated with the work of the Social Services and Child Protection Agency, and who was responsible for taking the major decisions. He wondered, as well, whether his impression was correct that NGOs had little involvement in child protection activities, particularly in the area of children deprived of families.

30. As Turkey received a large amount of international support for its social programmes, he would like to know whether the Government was making preparations, budgetary and otherwise, for a time when such support would no longer be provided.

31. Mr. SUNGAR (Turkey), replying to questions raised regarding Turkey's reservation to the Convention, said that there was no worldwide agreement on a definition of the term "minority". In numerical terms, the term simply meant less than a majority. In political terms, the minority and majority parties could be equal in strength. In the legal sense, Turkey derived its definition of the term from the Treaty of Lausanne, which accorded minority status to Greeks, Jews and Armenians. It was impossible to discuss the matter of minorities in Turkey without reference to that document. Another essential legal source was the Turkish Constitution. He could not say, however, that the reservation would hold indefinitely: such positions could always be reassessed.

32. The Turkish Government had recently submitted a document to the European Union, declaring that the official language and language of formal education of Turkey was Turkish, which did not prohibit the free usage of other languages in daily life provided that freedom was not used for the purposes of separatism and division. Turkey had lived through an epoch of severe terrorism, which had disrupted all levels of society. Although there were Turkish citizens of Kurdish background, the Kurdish population in Turkey could not constitutionally be considered a minority. Human rights and children's rights were surely, however, an evolving process; the question of minorities was under constant debate in Turkey, and he was sure that new assessments and understandings would be reached.

33. Ms. KUT (Turkey) said that Turkey was a party to most of the basic international instruments of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, and was deeply committed to improving its democracy, which included lifting any barriers to freedom of expression. In 1997, the Government had established a Higher Council for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Rights of the Child chaired by the State Minister responsible for human rights; in October 2000, a human rights department and a human rights consultative board had been set up within the Prime Ministry, which brought together representatives of public institutions and NGOs. In addition, a committee had been created to study human rights violations, and human rights

councils had been established at the provincial and district levels throughout Turkey. Recently, the structures established by the Prime Ministry in the field of human rights had been given force of law.

34. After Turkey's ratification of the Convention in 1995, the Prime Minister had designated the Social Services and Child Protection Agency as the coordinating agency for the implementation of the Convention in that country. In addition, it had been agreed that a Council for Children's Rights should be established, consisting of representatives of UNICEF, the Ministry of Justice, the Ankara Bar Association, and other bodies. A Department for Protection and Monitoring of Children's Rights had also been formed within the General Directorate of the Social Services and Child Protection Agency. Ad hoc committees had been formed to work on areas of importance to children's rights.

35. Various university departments had been directly involved in the rights and development of children. For example, the education department of Ankara University had organized the National Children's Culture Congress, which had been held three times, in 1996, 1998 and 2000; that department had also created a museum of traditional children's toys, which was a true innovation in Turkish culture. The Child Culture, Research and Implementation Centre had been established, also at Ankara University.

36. Provincial commissions had been set up, and their findings had been the subject of a report submitted to the President of the Republic. Subsequently, a Child Forum had been held with the aim of enabling children to express their views on the subject of the right of participation. Child commissions had been established, representing all categories of children, including school children, working children, street children, disabled children, children in need of protection and children in conflict with the law.

37. The definition of the child which appeared in the Turkish Civil Code conformed to the definition contained in article 1 of the Convention. The age of marriage had been changed to 17 for both males and females.

38. Mr. ZARARSIZ (Turkey) said that the three-year economic project introduced in Turkey under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank restricted all public expenditures, with the exception of funds for maternity, health care and education. For 2001, the total national budget amounted to $48 billion. The educational budget consisted of $4 billion from the national budget and $6 billion from extrabudgetary sources. The health budget was made up of $1 billion from the national budget and $1 billion from other sources. Each municipality had its own budget for those sectors. The national budget was nevertheless the main source, and its funds were allocated in accordance with the size of the municipal population.

39. Ms. AYTAÇ (Turkey) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was increasingly seen as an essential guideline in the protection of children's rights in Turkey. There was, however, a need for basic changes of attitude and increased information on children's rights. Since 1979, the juvenile courts had handled crimes by minors between the ages of 12 and 16, and had been responsible for administering protection, assistance and education to such children. The Turkish Government was aware that the relevant laws were not in conformity with

the definition of the child contained in the Convention. A further provision, allowing for prosecution by the military courts during states of emergency or under martial law also failed to conform with the terms of the Convention. The Ministry of Justice had undertaken a study to assess the compatibility of Turkish law with the Convention; its completion was expected in the near future. In addition, a commission established to draft a new civil code and a new criminal code had completed its work and had submitted a bill to the Turkish Parliament. A section of the new draft civil code was devoted to juvenile delinquency and the protection of children and adolescents from physical abuse.

40. Under the Turkish Civil Code, the minimum age for marriage had been 18 for males and females; with parental consent, however, girls had been permitted to marry at 15 and boys at 17. The new draft civil code provided that the minimum age of marriage for both boys and girls with parental consent would be 17. It was aimed at ensuring that both boys and girls completed eight years of compulsory basic education.

41. The Government was aware, moreover, that the bankruptcy law, which made it possible for children in custody disputes to be reclaimed by force under certain circumstances, was incompatible with the Convention and should be amended.

42. Turkey had ratified the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, and was preparing to sign the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption.

43. The Five Year Development Plan provided for the establishment of the office of ombudsman, which would have a general mandate to deal with civil, commercial and family matters. One of the deputy ombudsmen would be assigned the role of ombudsman for children. The UNICEF master plan of action for Turkey for the years 2001 to 2005 would devote considerable attention to developing a model ombudsman for children suitable for the Turkish culture.

44. In accordance with the Turkish Constitution, any international agreements to which Turkey was a party automatically had force of law in Turkey: the Convention could therefore be invoked before the courts.

45. Ms. YURDAKÖK said that the overall spending on health was more than the 1.9 per cent of the total budget indicated in the report. That figure corresponded to the amount spent by the Ministry of Health alone, whereas expenditure on health also came from other sources, such as the budgets of the Ministries of Education, Social Security and the Interior, and from university hospitals. Total health-care spending accounted for between 7 and 8 per cent of the State budget. Primary health care had been established as early as the 1960s, and the principal objective was to ensure that even remote areas enjoyed easy access to services. To that end, a network of over 11,000 health centres and 5,000 health houses existed all over the country. Over 70 per cent of health-care personnel worked in the public sector, but the proportion working privately was on the increase.

46. Mr. OYMAN said that Turkey was by no means the only European country yet to ratify the ILO Migrant Workers Convention, 1975 (No. 143). The precise views of the ministers

currently considering the question of ratification could be submitted to the Committee at a later date. Seven of the eight fundamental ILO Conventions had been ratified by Turkey, and the eighth, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), had been adopted by the National Assembly and was awaiting approval by the Council of Ministers. Efforts to combat child labour had been carried out pursuant to two successive protocols between ILO and the Government of Turkey, signed in 1992 and 1996 respectively. Furthermore, his Government had proposed to extend many of the programmes for the elimination of child labour, such as the one in Ankara, which the ILO Web site reported as one of the five most successful of some 1,000 similar programmes around the world. Thousands of children in the Ismir region were helped by programmes involving the various social partners, NGOs and relevant State bodies.

47. Ms. FERTEKLIGIL said that Turkey had signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention in September 2000, and both would be on the agenda for adoption by the National Assembly before the end of September 2001. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights had also been signed, and the ratification process had begun. Turkey was a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and had recently signed the Optional Protocol thereto, which was also on the agenda of the National Assembly for ratification. The Government was considering ways of ratifying the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

48. Mr. YAMAÇ said that a specialist police force for child-related crime had recently been established, with the task of improving conditions for all children. With the emphasis firmly on prevention, its officers were specially trained to deal with the problems most affecting children, and worked closely with psychologists, psychiatrists and teachers. One particular training course had been run in conjunction with INTERPOL, and other activities had been carried out with universities and NGOs. Secure units, equipped with televisions, washing machines and other amenities, were available to look after children under police supervision until they were returned to their parents. Further details could be obtained on the Web site of the Turkish police, which also offered advice and information to parents.

49. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ cited the Convention's provision that children's best interests should be a primary consideration in all decisions affecting them. That included decisions taken in the context of macro-economic, traffic and cultural planning, as well as health, education and welfare strategies. It was not sufficient to include the concept of the child's best interests in national legislation as a general idea: a clear policy must be pursued. The same was true for the principle of respect for the child's opinion, pursuant to article 12. It was the State's responsibility to ensure that the right to be heard was enjoyed by every child.

50. To have any genuine effect, the article in the Constitution concerning non-discrimination needed to be followed up by practical measures. As children were not born equal, some needed more favourable treatment than others to compensate for their disadvantages. She asked whether children born out of wedlock were treated the same as children of married couples. Besides Kurds, did children from other minority groups such as the Roma suffer from discrimination?

51. Despite the fact that the right to life, survival and development was guaranteed in the Constitution, the death penalty had not been officially abolished. The Committee would

appreciate an explanation of reports of honour killings of young girls, and an account of how the Government intended to tackle the problem. It appeared that neither the police nor the judiciary gave sufficient attention to such killings, which constituted a failure to implement article 6. Could the delegation also comment on allegations of disappearances and extrajudicial executions perpetrated by State agents in previous years?

52. Ms. KARP said she failed to understand Turkey's reasons for its reservation with regard to articles 17, 29 and 30. How did the Government's interpretation of the Constitution of Turkey and the Treaty of Lausanne restrict the application of those articles? Was its policy to apply the articles only to the three minorities recognized in the Treaty of Lausanne, or did it propose to give them general application, with the reservation that they did not imply a derogation from the definition of minorities given in the Treaty? As she understood it, articles 17, 29 and 30 concerned the right to a cultural, religious and linguistic identity, and that right should be guaranteed, whether or not a child was recognized as belonging to a particular minority. There were no grounds for restricting the right to belong to a community to children belonging to the three minorities identified in the Treaty of Lausanne.

53. She would be interested to learn what action the Government was taking to combat police brutality, and whether it had a specific policy to address the alarming number of child abductions. It was also of concern that rape victims were being subjected to intimate examinations against their wishes; what was the Government's attitude towards that practice?

54. Ms. EL GUINDI said that large numbers of children were not registered at birth, particularly in rural areas, which meant they were denied civil rights such as access to education and health services. She would appreciate more information on that situation. Could more details also be provided on private sector expenditure on health care?

55. Ms. AL-THANI said that corporal punishment continued to be used illegally in schools, and asked what the Government was doing to prevent it. She expressed concern at cases of police brutality towards children. Police were holding juveniles for questioning without informing the parents or allowing the presence of a lawyer. Could the delegation comment on those allegations?

56. Ms. CHUTIKUL asked for an explanation of an ambiguity in the Constitution concerning citizenship. It was stated that children of a Turkish father or mother were automatically entitled to Turkish nationality, whereas the citizenship of a child born to a Turkish mother and a foreign father should be defined by law. Did that mean that children lost the right to citizenship in the latter case?

57. Article 49 of the Basic Law on National Education gave village administrators the responsibility of identifying children who did not appear on civil registries. Did that mean that unregistered children had no access to education, and did they have other disadvantages?

58. She would appreciate information on the link between the new police unit with special responsibility for children and the phenomenon of police brutality.

59. Ms. OUEDRAOGO asked what practical activities were being carried out to identify non-registered children. Were village administrators able to register all children in that situation? It would be more effective to try to tackle the reasons for non-registration, for instance by raising awareness in rural areas of the importance of civil registry.

60. There appeared to be some restriction of freedom of thought, conscience and religion, given that religious culture and ethics were compulsory topics in State educational institutions, and that it was difficult in practice for parents to exercise their right to withdraw their children from classes of that nature. Even for young adults over 18 years of age, certain restrictions still applied to the right to peaceful assembly. She would be interested to learn the Government's attitude towards those issues.

61. Children were not allowed to join trade unions until they attained the age of 16, but the minimum age for employment was 12. Many working children were thus deprived of their right of association. The Committee would welcome information on the right to privacy, in particular as it related to family life and private correspondence or telephone conversations and to the situation of children at school.

62. According to the written replies, child abuse was a serious problem. Did the Government have a plan of action to combat it? While efforts had been made to stop corporal punishment in schools, the Committee would welcome information on measures taken against such punishment in the home, such as the encouragement of more peaceful means of disciplining children.

63. Ms. SARDENBERG asked whether children had the opportunity to participate in family matters, or whether parents had absolute authority. Noting that the literacy rate for women was far lower than for men, she asked whether anything had been done to correct that situation. According to information in the press, in January 2001, 28 Kurdish boys had been arrested for chanting slogans, and in 1999 6 school children had gone on trial for holding an unauthorized demonstration during which they had allegedly held up a sign reading "We Want Teachers". Could the delegation comment on those allegations?

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.